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130825Z Apr 04

UNCLAS ROME 001428

SIPDIS

FROM U.S. MISSION IN ROME

STATE FOR PRM/P AND IO/EDA
INFO USAID FOR A/AID, DCHA/FFP LANDIS, DCHA/OFDA MENGHETTI
USDA FOR FAS CHAMBLISS, SCHATZ, REICH AND HUGHES
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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: Joint WFP and FAO Letter regarding deepening cooperation

11. Summary. The US Mission Rome has recently been made aware of a joint letter issued by WFP and FAO on November 27, 2003, that describes how their respective organizations might enhance cooperation and requests all WFP and FAO offices in the field and at headquarters to become engaged in enhanced cooperation. US Mission Rome personnel indeed have seen evidence of enhanced cooperation in the field and we are encouraged by the initiative the letter represents. End summary.

12. The World Food Program (WFP) and Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) have provided Permanent Representations in Rome with a copy of a letter signed in November by Henri Carsalade, FAO's Assistant Director General, and Jean-Jacques Graisse, WFP's Deputy Executive Director for Operations. The letter represents an understanding between the two organizations aimed at enhancing cooperation, particularly in the field. Mustering combined forces with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the letter lays out, will help the World Food Summit goal of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015.

13. First immediate and practical steps toward strengthening collaboration listed are:

- Review of the ongoing cooperation and identification of new areas of potential joint work;
- Further development of the existing collaboration matrix to include new areas of cooperation, focal points in both FAO and WFP and ways to monitor progress;
- Pilot-testing of innovative ways of addressing the issue of protection of livelihoods of food insecure people;
- Identification of the modalities for enhancing the technical and other aspects of WFP projects through the provision of relevant FAO expertise, as well as inclusion of South-South Cooperation;
- Encourage field staff to improve collaboration in joint assessments and other activities.

14. Looking ahead, the understanding identifies potential areas for enhanced or innovative collaboration, including the following:

- Twin-track strategy to food security. Consistent with their own priorities and a country's own national strategy, WFP and FAO should identify opportunities for enhanced collaboration vis--vis the United Nations Development Assessment Framework, Common Country Assessment, and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper. This approach to food security would include promoting a concept of a National Alliance Against Hunger;

- Needs assessments. The two organizations have started a process to improve the methodology of joint work on needs assessments, updating the guidelines for the Crop and Food Supply Assessment Missions, and cooperating in the tracking of people in need of food and livelihoods and in the planning of short and long-term interventions to reduce vulnerabilities to emergencies.

- Special program for food security. Some 30 countries appear to be committed to scaling up food security issues to a national level. This paves the way for expanded partnerships between FAO and WFP in assisting countries to develop inclusive food security strategies leading to a reduced dependence on food aid.

- Emergencies and the provision of agricultural inputs. The organizations are encouraging further collaboration in emergency preparedness and planning stages, at the onset of an emergency and in the transition to rehabilitation and recovery, through provision of agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizer, tools, vaccines, animal feed and fishing gear in tandem with food aid in order to enhance the possibility of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

- Nutrition. As members of the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition, WFP and FAO have long collaborated on matters relating to nutrition, and more recently, household food security and livelihoods. They seek to work more closely to develop guidelines

and training materials; incorporate food security, nutrition and livelihoods considerations in the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) working group on HIV/AIDS; and develop nutrition interventions, solve micronutrient problems, and support mother and child health initiatives.

15. Comment. Congruent with recent UN initiatives to improve coherence between funds and programs, e.g., as discussed in January 2004 by the UN Development Group Executive Committee, the joint letter between WFP and FAO identifies and encourages

opportunities for their respective organizations to explore and expand their collaboration. Both benefit from this, offering better response and services to their donors. The US Mission Rome supports this initiative, which is directed to all of their respective offices in the field and relevant headquarters units. In addition to the high level statements of cooperation and country level joint projects, the effort targets the operational units of both agencies, which is encouraging. When cooperation among humanitarian assistance organizations is poor, beneficiaries suffer. However, as we have seen in the field, FAO and WFP are learning to work well together and the hungry are most important beneficiaries of their enhanced cooperation. Cleverley

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2004ROME01428 - Classification: UNCLASSIFIED